

CONNECTION

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

January 2006

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

During the second quarter of FY06, DRPT has set a new standard for measuring and evaluating transportation projects.

Focusing on the public benefits that the Commonwealth would receive in return for public investments, DRPT evaluated the first set of Rail Enhancement Fund projects using criteria such as gallons of fuel saved and the number of vehicles reduced on Virginia's roads.

This process is just one example of how DRPT is proactively exploring and developing better accountability and performance standards. It considers impacts not only for rail and public transportation, but for the broader transportation system in Virginia- especially highways. It helps people understand the true impact of rail improvements, and protects the Commonwealth's investments.

Going forward, we will evaluate the feasibility of applying similar standards to our other service areas: public transportation and commuter services.

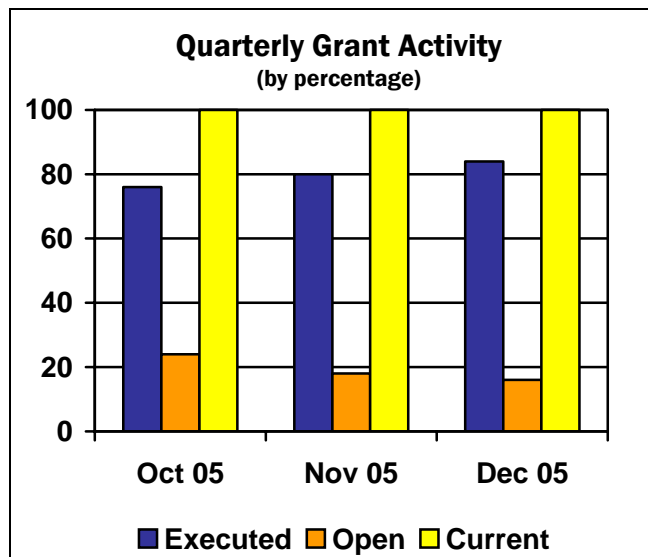
Karen J. Rae - Director

ACCOUNTABILITY

Successful APA Audit: DRPT received high marks from the Auditor of Public Accounts for a special review audit in December 2005. The APA found that DRPT is well managed, and with new fiscal management onboard, the agency is on track with the proper internal controls. APA also concluded that DRPT's current grant management processes provide adequate oversight and ensure compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations.

Automated Document Control System: A pilot program will be launched to test an electronic records management system within DRPT in February 2006. Once the system is up and running, it will bring DRPT to the next level of records management using digital technology to ensure that all records are documented, filed and archived. Improving the management of DRPT records will increase staff efficiency and improve accountability.

PERFORMANCE



From October to December 2005, DRPT brought the total number of executed (under contract) FY06 grants in the Six-Year Improvement Program up to nearly 85% of total grants awarded.

Over the same period, 100% of the grants were current (not expired) and only 16% were open (not yet under contract). Nearly 70% of the open grants are federal 5310 grants, which will go under contract in February 2006.

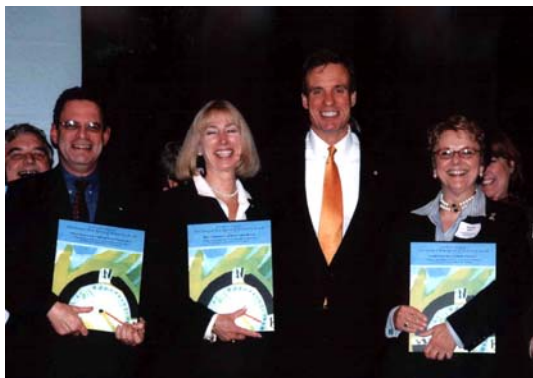
Developing New Measures: DRPT has established a new set of measures for transportation projects through the Rail Enhancement Fund. The new measurement system is based on calculating the public benefit for transportation projects. Through this approach, DRPT was able to conclude that the rail projects awarded on Dec. 15, 2005 could save over 17 million gallons of fuel and remove millions of cars and trucks from Virginia's roads each year.

Improving Grant Management: Software enhancements are underway to improve DRPT's grants management system. Scheduled for completion in spring 2006, the improved system will save time, provide more accurate results and improve tracking, measurement and reporting capabilities.

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

Governor's Budget: Rail and public transportation funding in Governor Warner's budget proposal goes beyond one-time investments with an additional \$25-30 million per year in sustainable, capital funding for public transportation. The budget also includes a total of \$26.1 million to match federal SAFETEA-LU earmarks for rail and transit. It supports Metro Matters with \$20 million for WMATA rail yard improvements and provides \$15 million for VRE to purchase railcars and locomotives. \$10 million is slated for statewide bus purchases and \$1 million would go to the Telework program.

Awards and Honors: DRPT received the Spirit of Discovery Award from Governor Warner for supporting and coordinating specialized transportation services for Virginians. The Warner Administration received the W. Thomas Rice Rail Renaissance Award for 2005 from Virginians for High Speed Rail for their role in establishing Virginia's Rail Enhancement Fund and Rail Advisory Board.



Neil Sherman, human services transportation manager, (left) accepts the Spirit of Discovery Award from Governor Warner on behalf of DRPT.

RideFinders, a DRPT grant recipient, received the Outstanding TDM Program Award for their Clean Air- Bike Challenge Program from the Association for Commuter Transportation.

Rail Enhancement Fund: Following the Commonwealth Transportation Board's decision to approve the first set of projects for funding on December 15, 2005, DRPT has been working to define contract language and move forward with the first set of rail improvement projects.

Contracts will be signed in spring 2006 and several projects will begin construction or study, depending on the project, this year.

STATUS OF KEY PROJECTS AND STUDIES

PROJECTS:

- ♦ **Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project:** See the attached supplement for the latest information on the project.

- ♦ **Washington, DC/Richmond Corridor:** Construction of the Elmont Crossover began in October 2005 and is scheduled for completion in summer 2006. DRPT is revising estimates for the next project, L'Enfant Third Track, which is scheduled to begin construction in August 2006.

STUDIES:

- ♦ **Acca Yard Study:** DRPT signed a contract in December 2005 with HDR Engineering to conduct a study of Acca Yard in Richmond. This study will, in coordination with CSX, determine ways to improve rail transportation through the Richmond area. It is scheduled for completion by March 31, 2007. Results of this study will help identify specific improvements or projects that could qualify for Rail Enhancement funds.
- ♦ **Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail:** The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for completion in March 2006. This document will evaluate the environmental and social impacts of each alternative, and DRPT will hold public hearings once the draft is published.

GRANTS UPDATE

Impact: This quarter, DRPT helped provide people with emergency access to basic services after the only grocery store in Crewe, VA closed. Through a \$5,700 demonstration grant, the Town of Blackstone can operate *The Crewe/Burkeville Express* to bring the elderly, disabled and others to neighboring towns to buy necessities such as groceries and medical supplies.

16 Rural Transportation Projects: An FTA Section 5311 capital grant project executed in December 2005 will provide \$5.3 million for much-needed capital purchases such as expansion vehicles, replacement vehicles and equipment for 16 of Virginia's rural transit systems.

Annual Application Period is Open: DRPT has begun receiving applications as part of its annual funding cycle for public transportation, commuter services, transportation demand management and human service transportation grants. Approximately \$173.4 million in state funds is available, and applications are due by February 1, 2006. DRPT will submit a tentative program of projects to the Commonwealth Transportation Board at the Board's March 2006 meeting.

Commuter Services Pilot Program: In November 2005, DRPT contracted with NuRide to establish an employer-based Carpool Incentive Program in Hampton Roads worth up to \$330,000. The program is administered by HRT Traffix to support the VDOT Coliseum Central Highway Improvement Project congestion management program.

DRPT CONNECTION SUPPLEMENT • January 2006

DULLES CORRIDOR METRORAIL PROJECT UPDATE



The Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project continues to stay on track, with the completion of preliminary engineering for Phase 1 of the 23-mile extension of Metrorail service from the East Falls Church Metrorail Station to Dulles International Airport scheduled for submission to DRPT by Dulles Transit Partners in late February 2006.

The first phase of the project will run from East Falls Church west through Tysons Corner to Wiehle Ave on the eastern edge of Reston. Phase 2 will run from Wiehle Ave to Route 772 in Loudoun County, with stops in Reston, Herndon, Route 28 and Dulles International Airport.

MWAA Proposal

A recent proposal by the Washington Metropolitan Area Airports Authority (MWAA) to take over operations of the Dulles Toll Road and the management of the Metrorail project await state action. At the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project office, all work continues full speed ahead.

Public Involvement

After DRPT identified cost reductions of more than \$600 million from changes to the plan in the Tysons Corner area, the Federal Transit Administration required DRPT to hold a public information meeting on changes in the Tysons Corner area and in the Route 7 alignment.

More than 230 people attended the session where two dozen staffers from DRPT, Dulles Transit Partners, Fairfax County, VDOT and WMATA discussed the changes with the public.

Staff also discussed the environmental assessment of the project required by FTA after the changes were made. DRPT expects to submit that evaluation to FTA by the end of January 2006. A public hearing on the new environmental assessment will be held in early spring.

Looking Ahead

The Federal Transit Administration continues to study DRPT's New Starts submittal. FTA's report to Congress is expected to be released in early February 2006.

Upcoming milestones include the following:

- DRPT will request approval to enter final design in spring 2006.
- DRPT will request a full-funding grant agreement through FTA in summer 2006.
- The design-build phase should begin in late summer 2006.
- Construction of Phase 1 is expected to begin in early 2007.

This schedule is subject to federal funding and approvals.

